



## United States Department of the Interior


OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

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### MEMORANDUM

To: Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs  
Director, Bureau of Land Management  
Director, Fish and Wildlife Service  
Director, National Park Service

From: Bryan C. Rice, Director - Office of Wildland Fire 

Subject: Delayed Implementation of the Department of the Interior Medical Standards Program process for Administratively Determined Firefighters in Alaska

The Department of the Interior (DOI) Wildland Firefighter Medical Standards Program (DOI MSP), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the Alaska Fire Service (AFS) acknowledge the current challenges faced by Administratively Determined/Emergency Firefighters (AD/EFF) in Alaska to obtain and ensure medical qualifications and that it will take time to resolve these challenges. Therefore, the DOI MSP process for medical exams among AD/EFFs in Alaska for the 2017 fire season will not be phased in as originally planned. The DOI MSP and stakeholders are committed to establishing the proper foundation to assure future successful implementation.

AD/EFF Firefighters and potential candidates in rural villages reside in numerous remote locations geographically dispersed throughout Alaska. Weather and timing of exams are also factors, underlined by a limited/adapted healthcare infrastructure make it extremely difficult to gather health information in person and perform physical exams for job qualification. In spring 2016, the DOI MSP and Contractor, Comprehensive Health Services Inc. (CHSi) traveled to key Alaskan villages to meet with stakeholders and assess feasibility for implementing the new DOI MSP process. Input from the visit led to a phased implementation proposal from CHSi, which heavily relied on local level coordination from AFS and close partnership, communication and deliverables from local tribal entities. Although the proposal had merit, the role and process for key coordination and communication pieces required in the plan, lacked commitment. There were also unknowns related to costs associated with the likely need for supplementation of services through mobile health events.

Given the lessons learned during the preliminary effort, the DOI MSP will continue work over the next year to lay the foundation and process for support of a phased implementation of medical exams for AD/EFF firefighters in Alaska. The revised goal for initiation of implementation is Summer/Fall 2017 to support 2018 fire operations. The next steps will be to

initiate discussions with Alaska Area Indian Health Services for services, assess the level of local coordination needed and identify any need to adapt exam components to fit health service capabilities.

Any questions can be directed to Richard (Dick) Bahr, Deputy Director Management and Operations, Office of Wildland Fire at [richard\\_bahr@ios.doi.gov](mailto:richard_bahr@ios.doi.gov) or 208-334-1550 or Kaili McCray, Wildland Fire Medical Standards Program Lead at [larry\\_mccray@fws.gov](mailto:larry_mccray@fws.gov), or 208-387-5810.

cc: Interior Fire Executives  
Interior Fire Directors  
Director, Office of Human Resources  
Director, Office of Occupational Safety and Health  
Program Manager, DOI MSP